



# FEMA

## Austin Pre-Disaster Mitigation Saves Homes

**Austin, MN** - When the City of Austin, located in southern Minnesota, implemented their most recent mitigation project, no one expected to reap the benefits so soon. In 2007, the city acquired and removed 15 flood-prone homes in the Wildwood Park area, which had flooded six times between 1978 and 2004. The acquisitions couldn't have come sooner. In June of 2008, the Wildwood Park area was flooded again and every acquired, but now vacant, parcel was once again flooded.

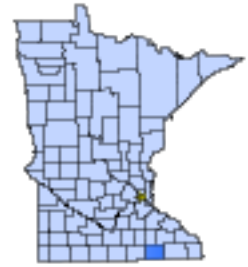
The city and its 23,000 residents are no strangers to flood damage. Since 1978 the City of Austin has acquired 240 homes and businesses in order to remove them from the threat of flooding. These acquisitions have saved the city and State and Federal governments millions of dollars in losses avoided as a result of the mitigation efforts.

The City of Austin may be best known as the home of the Spam, the canned meat product. But beyond Spam, the city is proactive and progressive in reducing its flood threat. After experiencing a devastating flood in 1978, local officials began to realize the importance of mitigation in a city prone to floods. With Cedar River, Turtle Creek, and Dobbins Creek converging in the center of the city, hundreds of homes had been flooded in the 1978, 1983, 1993, 2000, and 2004 floods. This degree of damage was unbearable to the residents and frustrating to city leaders trying to protect homes and infrastructure.

In September of 2006, the City received a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Competitive (PDM-C) grant to purchase 15 homes in Wildwood Park along the Cedar River. During 2007, the City of Austin implemented their PDM-C grant and purchased 15 homes in the Wildwood Park neighborhood, which would have been flooded in their basements and to their first floor in 2008 if they had not been acquired.

The PDM-C grant was true mitigation at work: acquiring a flood-prone home before it was flooded again. In 2004, the Wildwood Park area had over \$575,000 in flood damages. Add that value to the five previous floods and the area has incurred over \$2.6 million in damages since 1978. The city worked with the Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management as well as with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide PDM-C funding for the \$2.2 million dollar project. The city had already developed a Comprehensive Linear Park System to manage the acquired flood-prone properties so the open space can be enjoyed by all its citizens. The Wildwood Park acquisitions will now make it possible for the city to connect bike trails in parks across the city.

In addition to protecting the 15 homes, the PDM-C project enabled the city to remove the sanitary sewer service to that area, which alleviated sewer backup problems to an additional 36 homes located near the acquisition area but away from the threat of riverine flooding. These 36 homes are no longer prone to sewer backup resulting from the Wildwood Park overland flooding since all sewer connections were removed and the floodwaters are unable to enter the sanitary sewer system.



Mower County,  
Minnesota



### Quick Facts

Sector:

**Public**

Cost:

**Amount Not Available**

Primary Activity/Project:

**Acquisition/Buyouts**

Primary Funding:

**Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM)**